



Cairngorms National Park Plan
Progress 2009/10



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Frosty scene

The Vision

Imagine a world class National Park.

An outstanding environment in which the natural and cultural resources are cared for by the people who live there and visit; a renowned international destination with fantastic opportunities for all to enjoy its special places; an exemplar of sustainable development showing how people and place thrive together. A National Park that makes a significant contribution to our local, regional and national identity.

This is our vision for the Cairngorms National Park in 2030.

Foreword

The Cairngorms National Park Plan now has less than two years to run to 2012 before a new version is used for 2012 to 2017. I'm delighted that this year we expect more than three quarters of the outcomes in this Park Plan to be completed by 2012 – a big increase over our assessment from last year. This has been down to all the partners' work in delivering the Park Plan and to the 'Health-Check' we held last year to take stock of progress.

There have been achievements in each of the Park Plan's Priorities for Action during the past year. Those that stand out for me include the formal establishment of the Cairngorms Business Partnership and the continued development of projects through the EU funded Clim-ATIC programme, including the introduction of the Cairngorms Electric Vehicle and promotion of local woodfuel as a lower carbon energy source in the Cairngorms National Park.

During 2010, we are also turning our attention to what the priorities should be for the next National Park Plan, that will run from 2012 to 2017. The CNPA will therefore speak to many people and partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors in order to produce a draft Cairngorms National Park Plan for consultation in 2011.



David Green/Daibhidh Green
Convener/Neach-gairm

Cairngorms National Park Authority
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Facal-toisich

Tha nas lugha na dà bhliadhna aig Plana Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh ri dhol gu 2012 mus bi tionndadh ùr air a chleachdadh airson 2012 gu 2017. Tha mi air leth toilichte gu bheil sùil againn am bliadhna ri còrr air trì chairteal de thoraidhean a' Phlana seo a bhith air an coileanadh aig 2012 – mòran a bharrachd air a' mheasadh a bha againn an-uiridh. Bha seo mar thoradh air obair nan com-pàirtichean uile ann an libhrigeadh Plana na Pàirce agus an 'Sgrùdadh Slàinte' a rinn sinn an-uiridh airson measadh air adhartas.

Bha coileanadh anns gach Prìomh-amas Gníomha ann am Plana na Pàirce rè na bliadhna a chaidh seachad. Am measg an fheadhainn as cudromaiche dhomhsa tha stèidheachadh foirmeil Com-pàirteachas Gnothachais a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus leasachadh leantainneach air pròiseactan tron phrògram Clim-ATIC a fhuair maoinachadh bhon Aonadh Eòrpach, a' gabhail a-steach Carbad Dealain a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus brosnachadh connadh-fiodha ionadail mar chumhachd a tha nas isle ann an gualan ann am Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh.

Rè 2010, tha sinn cuideachd a' cur ar n-aire air dè na prìomhachasan a bu chòir a bhith san ath Phlana Pàirc Nàiseanta, a bhios a' ruith bho 2012 gu 2017. Mar sin bidh CNPA a' bruidhinn ri mòran dhaoine agus chom-pàirtichean bho na h-earrannan poblach, prìobhaideach agus saor-thoileach gus dreachd de Phlana Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh a dheasachadh airson co-chomhairle ann an 2011.

Introduction



The Cairngorms National Park Plan was developed to co-ordinate and prioritise the special management needs of the Cairngorms National Park. It is the blueprint for how the Cairngorms National Park will be managed over the next 25 years.

The Cairngorms National Park Plan was prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) in partnership with all those groups, organisations and individuals from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors already managing the Park. It sets out the long-term vision (25 years) for the Park and the priorities for action for the first five years of the Plan from 2007-2012.

The Cairngorms National Park Plan and the Progress Report 2009/10

This annual progress report for the Cairngorms National Park Plan has been prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) on behalf of all the partners who implement it.

The report summarises what has been achieved for each of the Park Plan's seven priorities for action in 2009/10; where we think we are in delivering the Plan's five-year outcomes; and also highlights future work and milestones. Each priority also incorporates a case study to practically illustrate the range of achievements and activities in more depth.

The day to day management of the Cairngorms National Park continues to be carried out by the organisations, land managers, businesses, communities and individuals who did so before the area became a National Park.

Many of them also deliver services, manage and contribute to the Park's special qualities in ways that the Cairngorms National Park Plan does not need to prioritise or co-ordinate. Their work remains vital to the Cairngorms National Park's success.

Monitoring the progress of each priority is reported to the Cairngorms National Park Authority board every four months. These reports can be viewed on the Cairngorms National Park Authority's website (www.cairngorms.co.uk).

The seven Priorities for Action for 2007–2012 are:

- Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes
- Integrating Public Support for Land Management
- Supporting Sustainable Deer Management
- Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
- Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable
- Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable
- Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park



The Cairngorms National Park Plan and the Progress Report 2009/10

Progress in 2009/10

Despite many changes taking place in the National Park and the world around it since the first National Park Plan was launched in 2007, significant progress during 2009/10 was made.

Figure 1 demonstrates that 78 per cent of the expected priorities for action outcomes highlighted in the original plan are expected to be achieved by 2012 with the work that is already planned and committed. Some of the remaining 22 per cent of outcomes are likely to be achieved by 2012 or soon after with planned work, but some may need reviewed or taken forward in the next Park Plan.

This overall picture is much healthier than that painted in last year's progress report. This is due to further progress being made over the past year and to a more consistent approach to assessment being implemented through the mid-term 'Health Check' that was co-ordinated last year.

Next steps

By the time this report is published in the Summer of 2010, all stakeholders will be engaged on the issues that need to be tackled for the next five-year National Park Plan that will take effect from 2012 onwards. This new Plan needs to be ready for consultation by Summer 2011 with the final plan presented to Ministers early in 2012 for approval.

Figure 1 - Progress towards five-year outcomes



Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes



This priority for action is intended to ensure that the important geology, wildlife, habitats, diverse landscapes and human history of the Cairngorms National Park are at least maintained and wherever possible strengthened.

It recognises that many of these features are important because of the way people have lived and managed the land in the past, and that current and future management holds the key to their continued health.

It is likely that the outcomes for this priority for action should be substantially achieved by 2012 with work that is programmed. Challenges exist in developing projects that improve habitat connectivity within the Park. The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity will provide a particular impetus to both engagement and biodiversity targets.

Achievements during 2009/10

- A rare plant project was established to secure the future survival of four of the rarest and most endangered plants in the Cairngorms National Park
- A pictorial guide on dragonflies and damselflies was produced to help people report sightings of these incredible insects
- Seven approvals worth £31,000 were made under the Cairngorms Biodiversity Grant Scheme
- A campaign to eradicate non-native plants was undertaken
- Initial preparations were progressed for a Big BioBuzz Day that will encourage as many people as possible to get involved in biodiversity related activities
- The creation of a community heritage officer post to help develop the cultural heritage ambitions of communities around the Park
- The first ever Scottish wildcat officer was appointed to manage a project that aims to secure the future survival of this endangered species

- A Scotland Rural Development Programme application resulted in three farms near Carr-Bridge attracting £9,000 of funding to help halt the decline in farmland waders

Milestones for 2010/11

- Delivery of three simultaneous Big BioBuzz 24 hour events to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity 2010
- Organisation and delivery of a Community Heritage Conference
- Ongoing delivery of the rare plants and wildcat projects





Dotterel

Ensuring that the important geology, wildlife, habitats, diverse landscapes and human history are at least maintained and wherever possible strengthened.

Cairngorms Rare Plants Project

A project to help secure the future survival of four of the rarest and most endangered plants in the Cairngorms National Park was started in 2009/10.

Thanks to a multi-agency approach to funding for the three year, £155,000 Cairngorms Rare Plants Project, twinflower, intermediate wintergreen, lesser butterfly orchid, and small cow-wheat will be the focus of a targeted conservation approach. Innovative management techniques supported by high quality academic research will be utilised.

Targets set out in the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Cairngorms National Park Plan and Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) Species Action Framework will be achieved as a result of the project.

Funding of £80,540 was secured from the Esmée Fairburn Foundation, £45,000 from SNH's Species Action Framework and £30,000 from the CNPA. The University of Aberdeen also provides an in-kind contribution for the Cairngorms Rare Plants Officer, Andy Scobie.

Based at SNH's offices at Achantoul near Aviemore, Andy will implement a programme of practical site management, set up translocations and establish new populations of the endangered plants. He said: "This project is a really exciting opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of these endangered plants and to work alongside land managers and experts in the field to develop and deliver targeted conservation action on the ground.

"Surveys will be conducted at a wide range of sites and the most suitable site-specific approaches will be employed to enhance the survival prospects of the target species. Land managers will be consulted at each step of the process and the longevity of this work will be secured by incorporating actions into long-term management plans."

A database of sites will also be developed and searches conducted in areas of suitable habitat. The help of volunteers and local recorders will be fundamental to the success of this, and members of the public will also be encouraged to get involved.



Lesser butterfly orchid

Integrating Public Support for Land Management



This priority for action is intended to support a diverse, viable and productive land management sector that continues to provide high quality primary produce such as food and timber, while delivering public benefits that are compatible with the Park's special qualities and make a growing contribution to employment and the local economy.

The priority seeks to move to a simpler system of support that is more integrated across sectors, clearly linked to the tangible delivery of public benefits, and is more closely linked to the needs and priorities of the Park.

The main challenge over the next two years is to maximise the opportunities of the rural priorities support system to target priorities in the National Park and to provide proactive guidance to land managers on the opportunities and how to realise them. The Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) will therefore be a powerful tool for delivering the final outcomes under this priority for action.

Achievements during 2009/10

- A woodfuel fair was delivered to bring together producers, processors and customers of this alternative fuel source
- An effective online resource was developed as part of the Low Carbon Cairngorms initiative
- A Cairngorms Farmers Forum, which engages directly with land management communities, was set up to enable collaborative working on land management issues
- Land based projects like 'Maximising Farm Woodlands' have helped farmers and land managers look at opportunities that exist on farms
- 41 applications totalling just over £5.25m have been approved under the SRDP
- Ongoing provision of advice and guidance was provided to support SRDP in the National Park through two land based support officers
- Approximately 780 people in around 200 different land based businesses received training on a wide range of subjects to help deliver public benefits in the Park more effectively

- A hill and river exhibition at Braemar Castle showcased the importance of salmon fishing, deer management and grouse shooting to the Deeside economy

Milestones for 2010/11

- Ongoing implementation of the woodfuel action plan
- Recruitment of a project officer by the Spey Catchment Management Partnership





Glen Beg

Supporting a diverse, viable and productive land management sector that continues to produce high quality primary produce while delivering public benefits.

Woodfuel Fair

A woodfuel fair took place which was the first step in implementing a Woodfuel Action Plan for the Cairngorms National Park. It was designed to show householders and businesses alike how they could effectively use the plentiful supply of wood in the National Park. This will help tackle climate change and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

Tackling climate change is a major priority in the Cairngorms National Park Plan and the promotion of a thriving woodfuel industry has the potential to promote the sustainable use of the Park's natural resources and can benefit the local community economically with increased forestry activity and employment.

A programme which helps communities adapt to the impacts of climate change provided backing for the woodfuel fair, which was the first of several information events to take place during the year under the banner Low Carbon Cairngorms. A website at www.lowcarboncairngorms.org explains everything people need to know about woodfuel.

The woodfuel fair and website is backed by the EU funded Clim-ATIC project which receives funding from the EU's Northern Periphery Programme. The initiative involved Perth College, Centre for Mountain Studies, Forestry Commission Scotland, Highland Birchwoods, the Cairngorms National Park Authority, local authorities and industry representatives.

Alvie Estate was chosen as the venue for the first event as Alvie House already uses woodfuel and the Estate runs its own onsite wood supply business. Estate owner Jamie Williamson said: "Using locally sourced wood for heating has reduced our

heating costs, given us greater control of our energy requirements and made the estate more self sufficient. It has also diversified our income and opened up another market for our timber."

John Risby from Forestry Commission Scotland added: "The business community and public organisations are starting to look more closely at using woodfuel as a viable alternative for their energy needs and we need to keep this momentum going. The event in the Cairngorms National Park brought a number of partners together who can help answer questions and demonstrate the benefits of using woodfuel."



Jamie Williamson, David Green and Danny Alexander MP at Woodfuel Fair

Supporting Sustainable Deer Management



Herd of red deer

This priority for action is intended to help balance the social, economic and recreational benefits that deer bring to the Park with the ecological processes in which deer are a natural part. The Cairngorms National Park Plan includes the objective of increasing the value of the deer resource.

The continued operation of the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) has been fundamental in supporting good communication and understanding between deer managers, agencies, the public, community interests and NGOs.

Four of the five 5-year outcomes are considered achievable by 2012. The other – helping a wider range of people enjoy deer stalking – is considered to need more work, although the Scotland-wide initiative Country Sports Tourism Group is already helping to take this forward.



Roe deer

Achievements during 2009/10

- Good progress was made towards the development of a Cairngorms Deer Framework including the drafting of a range of 'principles' for sustaining the deer resource
- Three meetings of CDAG took place to develop cohesive thinking across the National Park
- Further progress was made on 'Joint Agency Working' on designated sites with the aim of ensuring their management brings them into or keeps them in 'favourable condition'
- 'National Eat Venison Day' was promoted by the CNPA board in conjunction with national events promoted by the Scottish Venison Working Group
- Research was carried out into the hybridisation between sika and red deer
- An open day exploring the potential for wildlife tourism as a means of supplementing estate income was held on Alvie and Dalraddy Estate
- With guidance from CDAG, the CNPA responded to the consultation on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill

- Opportunities for increased access to deer stalking was explored with the Country Sports Tourism Group
- School children from Deeside learned about deer, their management and venison first hand on Glen Tanar Estate

Milestones for 2010/11

- Completion of the Cairngorms National Park Deer Framework
- A pilot study will be carried out to demonstrate the value of presenting deer management objectives across the National Park in a map format as an aid to communication and discussion
- Further research is planned on the hybridisation between sika and red deer where sika are more common, for example west of the River Spey
- Two events are planned to promote 'making the most of venison' by land managers, chefs and butchers across the National Park
- An event to involve school children in the story of deer management and venison – from hill to plate – is planned



Red deer in snow

Balancing the social, economic and recreational benefits that deer bring with the ecological processes in which deer are a natural part.

Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group

The Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG), which met three times during 2009/10, discussed a wide variety of issues and undertook a range of activities to continue the excellent work of the group.

Members visited Glen Feshie on a fact finding tour, by kind permission of Anders Holch Povlsen and hosted by Thomas MacDonell. For the last seven years, Glen Feshie Estate, under a voluntary deer control agreement with government agencies, has undertaken to enable the continued survival and regeneration of the native forest in the Glen. It was clear from the visit that the hard work is paying off. It began as a controversial step to bring about a dramatic change in deer numbers and has resulted in a very much improved habitat to which the deer will, in time, return. Some members of CDAG remain cautious about the short term effects of the cull on the deer herd, but in the main, the long-term benefits that have been achieved for both the deer and their habitat were applauded by the group.

CDAG also considered their role in terms of the delivery of 'Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach', accepting that the Deer Commission for Scotland and Cairngorms National Park Authority will rely heavily upon the support of CDAG and deer managers to achieve it. To this end there were a number of discussions to help inform the development of a Cairngorms Deer Framework during the year which when complete later in 2010 will lead to further action to help 'sustain the deer resource'.

Following a study that was carried out on the hybridisation between sika deer and red deer, CDAG agreed that it would be preferable to have a Park-wide objective. Some interesting

statistics from the survey were also produced which resulted in CDAG requesting further information on extending the study into areas where the two species were perhaps interacting more.

Following a presentation on GIS mapping tools that was provided by the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, CDAG members agreed that it would be useful to obtain maps of the Cairngorms National Park that show sensitive habitats, grazing tolerance, deer preference and management objectives. Combining these will provide a useful means of highlighting key areas of concern, leading to where attention may need to be focussed in the future.



Visitors to Glen Feshie Estate viewing the benefits of native woodland regeneration

Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access



Path to Coire an Lochain

This priority for action is intended to help more people enjoy even higher quality outdoor access to benefit their health, wellbeing and understanding of the Park.

This priority for action has six 5-year outcomes, all of which are considered likely to have been substantially achieved by 2012. This priority for action is closely linked to the development and management of the core paths plan for the National Park and implementation of associated access legislation.

Work is ongoing to improve path networks in the National Park and will continue alongside other support for managing countryside access.



Newly constructed path at Strathdon

Achievements during 2009/10

- A Local Inquiry into the Draft Core Paths Plan was undertaken which led to the adoption of the Core Paths Plan
- Partner contributions of £500,000 allowed The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust to operate successfully with path works undertaken in Braemar, Carr-Bridge and Kingussie
- Scottish Government approval in principle has been provided on the extension of the Speyside Way and work was progressed on securing permissions with land owners
- Two workshops were organised which attracted 40 delegates involved in event organisation and land managers, on effective planning for future events
- A new post was established to train walk leaders and co-ordinate work of the Walking to Health project in Badenoch and Strathspey
- The number of health walk schemes was expanded across the National Park
- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code was further promoted

- A new footbridge over the River Don was approved that will provide more walking opportunities and a safe link to Lonach Hall
- A wide ranging campaign to promote responsible outdoor access with dogs was started
- A new £30,000 all-abilities, 900 metre long woodland walkway was opened in Grantown-on-Spey

Milestones for 2010/11

- 70 per cent of the core paths network will be fit for purpose
- Planning permission will be sought and a funding package developed for extending the Speyside Way south from Aviemore to Newtonmore
- Land managers will be assisted to find solutions to irresponsible camping
- Guidance on the responsible promotion of outdoor access will be promoted
- There will be more health walking groups operating in the National Park



White water canoeing

Helping more people enjoy even higher quality outdoor access to benefit their health, wellbeing and understanding of the Park.

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT), which is a multi-funded innovative environmental charity that has been created to promote sustainable access to the Cairngorms National Park, successfully completed a major volunteer training initiative to deliver a suite of health walks in the Park during 2009/10.

The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project aims to encourage physical activity in a safe, social way that gets people from a wide range of backgrounds and fitness levels walking more as a step towards increasing their activity levels and wellbeing, while appreciating the special qualities of the National Park around them.

Guided weekly walks typically last 30-60 minutes and are adapted to suit the pace of walkers and are followed by some refreshments in a local café.

A new post was created to help train walk leaders and during the year a number of volunteer walk leaders found out how to effectively set up and lead walks as well as deal with basic first aid incidents.



Walking group organised by Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

Manager of COAT Dougie Baird said: "The 238 walks that have already been delivered between April and December 2009 have been well received by those taking part. As well as improvements to fitness, participants have highlighted how important the social aspects of getting together regularly are. As well as our project funding partners, we are also working with specific groups like Alzheimer Scotland and CLAN Cancer Group to provide walks for people with these illnesses and their carers.

"We are very grateful to a wide range of partners for supporting this and other activities that COAT is involved

with, especially Paths to Health and new European LEADER funding. Volunteers remain the cornerstone of this project as they encourage a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for those taking part."

Earlier in 2009, COAT also organised a training course delivered by the International Nordic Walking Association to allow local health walk leaders to deliver a Nordic walk session. This is one of the most adaptable exercises around that works the whole body rather than just the legs. As 2010 progresses, COAT will be looking for new volunteers in Granttown-on-Spey, Carr-Bridge, Kingussie, Newtonmore and Laggan.

Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable



Aviemore Railway Station

This priority for action is intended to increase the diversity, vibrancy and sustainability of the economy of the Cairngorms National Park. The Park's special qualities provide an increasing basis for economic activity and business use of the Cairngorms National Park brand improves commercial advantage and quality standards.

Many communities in the Park have completed community action plans and will have been therefore able to influence the way their communities' develop. The development of a marketing framework is a priority for the newly created Cairngorms Business Partnership during 2010/11 and the effects of these improved structures will be felt by consumers/customers or businesses in the National Park in the future.



Golfing at Kingussie

Achievements during 2009/10

- Continued roll out of Cairngorms National Park brand including incorporation on Stagecoach buses in Badenoch and Strathspey
- A 'Brand Pack' was launched to support businesses to use the Park brand
- Launch of a new electric vehicle to highlight and adapt to the effects of climate change
- Cairngorms Business Partnership developed and launched, providing a focus and lead for the business sector
- 133 projects were approved by the Cairngorms Local Action Group under the European LEADER programme
- A comprehensive visitor survey was completed with over 2,000 questionnaires gathered
- A socio-economic survey was completed that updates existing data and provides an indication of the economic health of the Park
- A Cairngorms-wide food and drink survey was completed
- A guide promoting the use of local timber in construction was completed

- An environmental support scheme for businesses was established with the Business Gateway service
- Aviemore and the Cairngorms 'business barometer' continued to obtain feedback on business confidence and future intentions
- A major tourism conference was delivered and a wildlife tourism training day was organised

Milestones for 2010/11

- A Park-wide and cross-sector 'Food for Life' programme will deliver key actions from the Cairngorms Food and Drink Action Plan
- Development of the environmental support for businesses to reduce waste, energy use and environmental impact
- Re-award of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas



Visitor accommodation

Increasing the diversity, vibrancy and sustainability of the economy of the Cairngorms National Park.

Cairngorms Electric Vehicle

The first electric vehicle to be used in a rural community was unveiled in the Cairngorms National Park by Fergus Ewing MSP, the Scottish Government's Minister for Community Safety who was on hand to test drive the Cairngorms Electric Vehicle (EV) from Aviemore to Kingussie High School.

The adapted five-door Vauxhall Astra features the distinctive Cairngorms National Park brand and colours and is available in the Cairngorms National Park under the banner of Clim-ATIC – an EU Northern Periphery Programme project aimed at helping communities adapt to the effects of climate change and which is led by the Centre for Mountain Studies at Perth College UHI.

The keys were handed over to the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company and will help contribute to a sustainable low carbon economy in the Park, becoming a ground breaking project for others throughout Scotland to possibly replicate.

The Cairngorms EV project is a partnership initiative being led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Perth College UHI with support from HITRANS (the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership), Community Energy Scotland, the Climate Challenge Fund and local schools and colleges.

The car was road tested by the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company – a local charity helping people who do not have access to transport to get to local services such as doctors, dentists and shopping.

Whilst the project is about tackling and adapting to climate change, the electric car is helping to meet many other aims in the National Park Plan from promoting sustainable transport to combating social inclusion issues.

Clive Bowman, Clim-ATIC programme leader said: "Electric may not be the answer everywhere, but we want to demonstrate that there are alternatives to using fossil fuels, which will help the National Park's communities adapt to climate change.

"While encouraging more bus and rail travel is essential to combat the effects of global warming we also think there is a place for shared transport and hopefully the trial of the electric vehicle will prove successful."



Cairngorms Electric Vehicle launch

Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable



This priority for action is intended to improve access to good quality, sustainably designed and affordable housing to help maintain sustainable communities in the long-term.

Despite some new supplies of affordable housing being created between 2006 and 2009 and some others expected to come on-stream by 2012, the overall pressure for affordable housing is unlikely to reduce significantly. With funding for affordable housing being primarily guided by local authorities, it is unlikely that any significant additional resources for affordable housing in the Park will be programmed by them before 2012, especially given the wider, poor economic conditions.

Achievements during 2009/10

- An action plan for Ballater was produced and a housing partnership group was set up following the Ballater One Voice Our Future community action planning process
- Several key housing schemes were in the process of being built or were completed following previous planning approvals including 25 affordable homes at Aviemore

- Rural Empty Property Project and Scottish Government funding was targeted for key housing projects in the Park
- The 'Our Community A Way Forward' community planning structure was selected by the Scottish Government as a good demonstration of best practice
- New housing innovations were explored like how to help new homes in the Park that receive no subsidy
- Village improvements for the communities of Dalwhinnie, Kingussie, Newtonmore and Laggan were implemented
- Funding was secured for a Cairngorms Construction Training Project
- Nine Park communities attended a 'Big Learning Day' to share experiences of community action planning in the area
- Ongoing work with private landlords and other agencies was carried out to raise the quality of existing properties and introduce better management practices

Milestones for 2010/11

- 15 unemployed Badenoch and Strathspey residents to complete their year's training as part of the Cairngorms Construction Training project
- Securing an unsubsidised affordable housing project in the Cairngorms National Park
- Completion and occupation of house(s) renovated under the Rural Empty Property grant project at Candacraig
- Complete the 3rd phase of community action planning process in Aviemore, Rothiemurchus, Glenmore and Kincaig
- Training sessions with private landlords and other agencies will raise the quality of existing properties and introduce better management practices
- Both the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and Cairngorms National Park Sustainable Design Guide are programmed for adoption by the CNPA by the end of 2010



Cottage at Carr-Bridge

Improving access to good quality, sustainably designed, and affordable housing to help maintain sustainable communities in the long-term.

Housing in the National Park

Despite the economic downturn stifling the building and construction sector during 2009/10, there were several areas of work that many partners, committed to the success of the Cairngorms National Park Plan, were active in. These will hopefully bear fruit in the final two years of the current National Park Plan.

The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust helped to secure multi-agency funding of £156,383 for three years from the EU LEADER programme, the Scottish Government's Wider Role Fund, Cairn Housing Association and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) for the Cairngorms Construction Training project. Issues like unemployment; the lack of affordable housing; and promoting highly sustainable housing designs will be taken forward under this initiative.

Elsewhere, a home at Candacraig Estate is being renovated as part of the Rural Empty property project and a further property has been identified to apply for grant funding from the Scottish Government.

Following the development of a community action planning exercise earlier in 2009, communities in the Deeside and Donside areas within the Cairngorms National Park are to get their own development manager to develop, plan, manage and deliver a range of projects including housing in the area over the next three years. Funding support from the European funded LEADER programme, Aberdeenshire Council and the CNPA has been provided.

Gordon Riddler, chair of Ballater (RD) Ltd, which is managing and co-ordinating the project on behalf

of agency partners said: "This appointment is an excellent result from a lot of hard work and agency support involved in recent community action planning.

"It will be a challenging and rewarding experience for anyone interested in engaging with the communities in the Cairngorms National Park to deliver a range of projects to support their future needs. It also provides a great new opportunity for communities, individually and collectively, to identify and realise projects to support their sustainability and future development."



Ballater

Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park



Public viewpoint near Boat of Garten

This priority for action is intended to increase awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and its special qualities throughout the Park and Scotland. It will help people to understand and appreciate why it is special and why it is managed in particular ways. Although four of the seven outcomes in this priority for action are likely to be substantially achieved by 2012, two require additional effort from partners to be achieved. These relate to increasing awareness of the Park across Scotland and to more people having an understanding of its special management needs.

A third outcome relating to the opportunities for people to be involved in practical caring for the Park and its special qualities also requires extra work, but is achievable. Work in other priorities including developing a marketing strategy; establishing the National Park web portal; and extending awareness of the National Park brand will all make a major contribution to achieving the outcomes for this priority for action.

Achievements during 2009/10

- Co-ordination and grant support for eight National Park ranger services was provided by the CNPA
- Scoping work for entry point signs for extension of the Cairngorms National Park was carried out
- Support for community information boards and use of panoramic paintings to show how communities fit into the National Park were produced
- A major refit of three VisitScotland Information Centres, using the National Park brand, photos and panorama, was completed
- Guidance for community path leaflets and three new path leaflets were produced
- A new leaflet promoting the Cairngorms National Nature Reserves was produced and work on better signage on three reserves was completed
- A new all-abilities visitor hide at Insh Marshes National Nature Reserve was built by RSPB with partner support
- The appointment of an outdoor learning post to develop outdoor learning opportunities for schools was made
- A 'barriers report' was produced showing how teachers use the outdoors
- 2,200 people completed a John Muir Award in the Cairngorms and two Junior Rangers programmes were organised
- A multi-agency funding package was initiated for a wooden shelter in which Carr-Bridge Primary School pupils can work on outdoor learning initiatives
- The trial sale of panoramic posters was carried out by the Cairngorms Business Partnership

Milestones for 2010/11

- The southern boundary to the extended Cairngorms National Park will be marked with granite signs – subject to Scottish Government approval
- Three ranger bases and two visitor centres will be upgraded to include interpretation about the special qualities of the National Park
- Agree three year policy on ranger services in the National Park and host the Scottish Ranger Rendezvous
- Develop learning resources for two National Nature Reserves that encourage greater use by pupils
- Develop a new marketing strategy for the National Park
- Launch of a new visitor website by the Cairngorms Business Partnership and Cairngorms Learning Zone – a new education website



Visitors at Loch an Eilein

Increasing awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and its special qualities throughout the Park and Scotland.

Visitor Information Centres

The VisitScotland Information Centre in the Cairngorms National Park at Aviemore was refurbished in 2010 incorporating state of the art facilities.

The Centre was the first of three VisitScotland Information Centres in the Cairngorms National Park to be revamped as part of the national tourism organisation's plans to update, rebrand and improve facilities throughout its entire information network.

Working in close partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority allowed VisitScotland to incorporate a Cairngorms National Park identity by using the Cairngorms brand. A dedicated National Park zone gives people all the information they need about the Park, helping them make the most of their visit.

Aviemore was amongst the first handful of Information Centres to benefit from this investment which includes a new interior design and improved layout and zoning, all of which is based on detailed consumer research, in order to improve the visitor experience.

VisitScotland's Aviemore Information Centre attracts around 150,000 visitors each year and with footfall already experiencing a 27 per cent increase since the start of 2010, this is expected to continue now that the upgrade has been completed. Local people as well as visitors are encouraged to call in to reacquaint themselves with the wide range of services on offer inside the new facility.

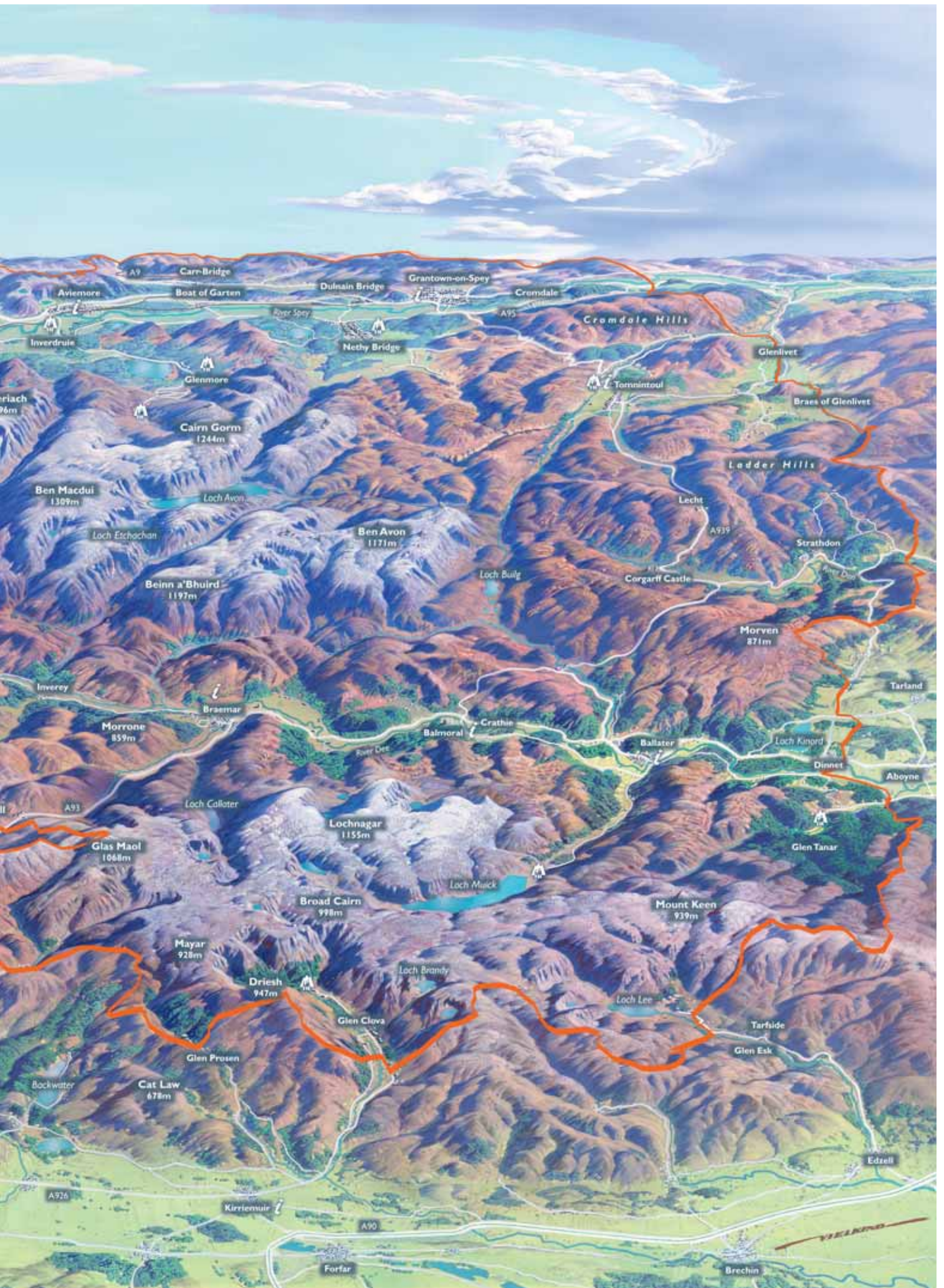
VisitScotland's Regional Director, Scott Armstrong, said: "The Information Centre at Aviemore has an impressive new look and feel with interactive facilities designed to engage visitors

and residents alike, inspiring them to explore Aviemore and the surrounding area.

"We have been delighted to work in partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority to ensure the needs of all visitors to the National Park are met if not exceeded. Our professional and knowledgeable VisitScotland staff will continue to deliver excellent, friendly help and advice from a world class facility that helps meet and exceed priorities laid out in the Cairngorms National Park Plan."



Cairngorms National Park zone at the Aviemore Visitor Information Centre





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